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DESCRIPTION

O F

St. KILDA,

T H E

Most remote *Western* ISLE

O F

SCOTLAND.

Giving an Account of

Its Situation, Extent, Soil, Produce, Bay,
and adjacent Islands or Rocks :

The Ancient and Modern Government,
Religion, and Customs of the Inhabi-
tants; and other Curiosities of Art and
Nature. Also their late Reformation.

*Mr. Buchan
in 1781
of the
Rev.*



*in 1781
of the
Rev.*

EDINBURGH.

Printed for the AUTHOR, and are sold by
MILKIN

The Introduction.

IT being perceived, what acceptable Entertainment the Discovery and Description of foreign Places has met with from People of this Country; many of whose Curiosity, if not Anxiety, to know the same, together with the Inhabitants their Language, Manner of Living, Clothing, Government, Religion, Laws, Commerce, &c. has cost them no small Travel, Expence and Pains, and that not without Hazard to their Persons, and Lives also: And having stocked themselves with good Store of this Kind of Knowledge, to their own Satisfaction, return home, and unload themselves of this their Acquest, dispersing it among their Country-men; looking upon it as sufficient Retribution for all their laborious and costly Toil, thus both to satisfy and benefit their Country.

From thir, and such like Considerations, an Inhabitant of St. Kilda (the Subject of the following Sheets, and one of our remotest Isles) was moved to publish this Description of it, being perswaded, that those who make such Account of foreign Discoveries, will gratefully accept of this, which is brought to their Hands with so little Trouble; it being also, as 'twere a Part of themselves: And especially, since there are as strange Things to be related of this Place, as perhaps of many, if not any, such little Isle in the World. But,

Not to detain the Reader any further in the Entry, view it as follows.



A
DESCRIPTION
OF

Saint *KILDA*, alias *HIRTA*.

THE first of these Names is taken from one *Kilder*, who lived here; and from him the large Well *Tonbir Kilda* has also its Name. *Hirta* is taken from the *Irish* *ler*, which in that Language signifies *West*. This Isle lies directly opposite to the Isles of *N. Uist*, *Herries*, &c. and is reckoned 18 Leagues from the former, and 20 from *Harries*. See *A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland*, by *M. Martin Gent.* printed London 1703, pag. 280.

St. Kilda in *Herm.* *Moll's Map* 1714, is 57 Deg. 6 Min. N. Latitude, and 10 D. 30 M. Longitude from the *London Meridian*. It lies 60 M. W. and by S. from *Harris*, 80 M. from *Lewis Isles*, about 90 M. W. from the Isle of *Skye*, and 220 M. N. N. W. from the *Mull of Cantire*, and 220 N. from the North of *Ireland*, 150 M. from the nearest Part of the Continent of *Scotland*.

The Inhabitants of this little Isle, or Commonwealth, whereof we are now begun to speak, may with more Safety live quiet and secure than the Men of *Laisb* of old (mentioned, *Judg.* 18. 7.) tho' the *Danish* were minded to attack them; because Nature hath fenced and surrounded them so with one whole Face of Rock, as 'twere, that there can be no Access for any in

in a friendly Way to get to them (by all, the Comers can do, yea, and with the Inhabitant's Assistance also) except at some few particular Times, and that, under very favourable Weather too, and but at one Place only, where the Inhabitants can easily defend themselves from any Hazard from, and greatly offend, any that shall attack them in a hostile Way, and also defy their Landing against their Will; tho' their Number, viz. of the Inhabitants, does not ordinarily exceed 200.

This People, as they are simple and innocent; so are they harbourous, and very kind to Strangers, who either may be coming or cast in about them; as is generally known by all who have stood in Need of their Assistance: Thus particularly, some Instances hereof the Reader may take from *M. Martin Gent.* his Book entituled, *A Voyage to St. KILDA*, printed at London 1698. We choose this Author, as a Witness to the Truth of this Part of our Account of the People of this Island, because (all others, who have wrote of it, having been very lame, and in sundry Things mistaken, in any Relation they have given of it) he was there, viz. in the Year 1697, and knows this, for his own Part, by Experience. And to do that Gentleman Justice, what he relates of it is generally Good, as they were then circumstantiated; and so the best Description any has given of this People and Island till now. But because that Book is out of Print (and besides of a great Price, tho' it were not) the Reader may take a few of his Remarks anent this Place, which are still genuine, as we find them fitting to our present Purpose, as we go along: And for the above (viz. their Kindness and Civility to strangers) take his own Experience, as he relates it in his own Words. Pag. 9th.

— The first of *June* (viz. 1697) — we rowed to *St. Kilda*: As we came close up the Rocks, some of the Inhabitants, who were then employed in setting their Gins, welcomed us with a *God save you*, their usual Salutation;

They outran our Boat to the Town; from thence they brought

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brought the *Steward* and all the Inhabitants of both Sexes to receive us ; we approached the outmost Part of the low Rock, called the *Saddle* ; a Parcel of the Inhabitants were mounted upon it, having on their Feet the usual Dress on such Occasions, *i. e.* Socks of old Rags, sewed with Feathers instead of Thread ; our Boat being come pretty near, it was kept off this Rock with long Poles ; some of their Number, coming by Pairs into the Sea, received Mr. *Campbel* and me upon their Shoulders, and carried us to Land, where we were received with all the Demonstrations of Joy and Kindness they were able to express ; ——— All of us walking together to the little Village, where there was a Lodging prepared for us, furnished with Beds of Straw ; and, according to the ancient Custom of the Place, the *Officer*, who presides over them (in the *Steward's* Absence) summoned the Inhabitants, who by Concert agreed upon a daily Maintenance for us, as, Bread, Butter, Cheese, Mutton, Fowls, Eggs, also Fire, &c. all which was to be given in at our Lodging twice every Day ; this was done in the most regular Manner, each Family by Turns paying their Quota proportionally to their Lands. I remember, says he, the Allowance for each Man *per diem*, beside a Barley Cake, was eighteen of the Eggs laid by the Fowl called by them *Lavy*, and a greater Number of the lesser Eggs, as they differed in Proportion ; the largest of these Eggs is near in Bigness to that of a Goose, the rest of the Eggs gradually of a lesser Size. Thus far of his own Words ; And much more might be added.

Take a second Instance of their Humanity, Pag. 87, *ib.* The Inhabitants had Occasion to shew great Kindness to a Boat's Crew, that was driven from the opposite Isle *South-Uist* ——— So that it may be said, of them, with great Justice, That their Charity is as extensive as the Occasion of it.

Take a 3d Instance from the Author *ibid.* Pag. 88. (which tho' not directly to the former Purpose, yet worthy the relating, and that to their great Commendation)

ation) is, says he, They told me of a Ship that dropped Anchor in the Mouth of the Bay the preceeding Year, and that the Lowlanders aboard her were not Christians: I enquired, if their Interpreter (who they said spoke bad *Irish*) had owned this to be a Truth; they answered, *Not*; but that they knew this by their Practices, and that in these three particulars; the first was, their working upon *Sunday*, carrying several Boats full of Stones aboard for Ballast; the second was The taking away some of their Cows without any Return for them, except a few *Irish* Copper Pieces; and the third was, The Attempt made by them to ravish their Women, a Practice altogether unknown in *St. Kilda*, where there has not been one Instance of Fornication and Adultery for many Ages before this Time.

I remember, says he, they told me, that the Bribe offered, for debauching the poor Women, was a Piece of broad Money, than which there could be nothing less charming in a Place where the Inhabitants cannot distinguish a Guinea from a Sixpence. Wherefore, as the same Author says, Pag. 130.

I must not omit acquainting the Reader, that the Account given of the Seamen's Rudeness to the Inhabitants, has created great Prejudices in them against Seamen in general; and tho' I endeavoured to bring them into some good Opinion of them, it will not be, says he, I hope, improper here to deliver the Terms upon which the Inhabitants are resolved to receive Strangers, and no otherwise: They will not admit of any Number exceeding Ten; and those too must be unarmed, for else the Inhabitants will oppose them with all their Might: But if any Number of them, not exceeding that abovesaid, come peaceably, and with good Designs, they may expect Water and Fire *Gratis*, and what else the Place affords, at the easiest Rates in the World.

The Air here is sharp and wholsom; the Hills are often covered with ambient white Mists, which in the Winter are Forerunners of Snow, if they continue on the Tops of the Hills; but thus in Summer,
Rain;

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Rain; and descending to the Valleys, of excessive Heat. The Night and Day there being much in Length with our own in the North of *Scotland*. Their Harvest and Winter are liable to great Winds and Rain, the *South-west* Wind annoying them most.

St. *Kilda* is two Miles long from *East* to *West*; one Mile in Breadth, viz. from *South* to *North*; five Miles in Circumference. The Bay, which is not so fenced with Rocks as the rest, lying to the *South-east*, is generally well fenced with a raging Sea. This Bay is Half a Mile in Length, and as much in Breadth. Vessels do not ordinarily anchor here, for fear of Damage by stormy Weather; but look on it as safer to do that without it. The only landing Place here, is upon a Rock on the *North*-side of this Bay; the which Rock hath a little Declension, and is slippery, being cover'd with sundry sorts of Sea-weeds; all which, with a raging Sea, which is seldom wanting there, renders it very inaccessible; and hardly is there a Possibility of Landing, but under Favour of a neap Tide, a *North-east* or *West* Wind, or perfect Calm. These Circumstances concurring, the Boat (called the *Birlin*) is brought up-sides of the Rock, upon which, all the Inhabitants, of both Sexes, hale her through this Rock, with a Rope fastened about the Stern of it.

There is a plain Sand at the Head of this Bay, to be seen in Summer only; the Sea in Winter washing off the Stones: But there is no safe Landing here at any time, which some have found to their Cost: When the Wind is at *South* or *North-east*; some Ships take Shelter in a little Bay on the West-side of this Isle: which is all fac'd with an Iron-colour'd Rock; there being no Place of the Rock here, where one may land, a Neap-Tide or Calm offering. The Sea is so very impetuous around this Isle, that big Stones are remov'd from their Place, and cast into a certain other called the *Gullies Dock*: some of which, when measured, have been found to be 7 and 8 Foot long, and 3 or 4 broad. There are several Fountains of good Water on each side of this Isle.

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There is an ancient Fort, on the *South-end* of the Bay, called *Dunfir Volg.* i. e. the Fort of the *Volscii* being the Senle the *Antiquaries* of the opposite Isles of *Uist* put upon it.

The Isle *Sca* is near Half a Mile distant from the *West-side* of *St. Kilda*: It is a Mile in Circumference very high and steep all round. *Borera* lies above two Leagues N. of *St. Kilda*; it is near a Mile in Circumference; the most of it surrounded with a high Rock. The largest and two lesser Isles are good for Pasturage, and abound with Sea-Fowl from *March* till *September*: The Solan-Geese being very numerous in *Mr. Martin's* Time, they, then, used no Salt, but preserved their Fowls, and the Eggs of Sea Wildfowl, with Peat-ashes; and are astringent to such as be not accustomed to eat them.

The Inhabitants, whose Number is about 27 Families in *Mr. Martin's* Time, but now 30 or 33, living together in a little Village, having all the Signs of an extreme Poverty; their Houses of a low Form, and very rudely built. It is surrounded with four Mountains, which are as so many Ramparts of Defence and Amphitheatres, from whence a fair Prospect of the Ocean and Isles are to be seen in a fair Day. The Village hath a Rivulet running close by it. There is another celebrated Well, called by the Inhabitants the *Well of Youth*, inaccessible by any but themselves because of the Steepness of the Rocks, they being wonderful Climbers; a Specimen whereof may be narrated afterwards.

There is a Rivulet beyond *Kilder's* Well, serving for washing Linen; which it doth as well without Soap as other Water with it: Strangers have found the Experience thereof, particularly *Mr. Martin*, as well as others.

The whole Island is one hard Rock form'd into four high Mountains, three whereof are in the Middle all thinly cover'd over with black or brown Earth not above a Foot, and in some Places Half a Foot, deep

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except in the Top of them, where 'tis above three Foot deep, and affords them good Turf.

The Grass here is very short, but kindly; yet have they now but little Milk, the best Cow among them whereof the Number, small and great, exceeds not 100, but fat and sweet fleshed) not giving above a Scots Choppin. The Number of Sheep maintain'd there, and the two adjacent Isles, does not exceed 2000, and generally speckled, some white, some Philamort, and of an ordinary Size; but resemble not Goats, in any Thing (save in the Bigness of their Horns) as some Writers by Misinformation have related; they are never milked, (*viz.* those of the lesser Isles; but these of St. Kilda, are) which disposes them to be more prolific; they have 2 or 3 Lambs at a Birth, especially in the Isle of *Son*, which feeds 500 Sheep, as also in some little adjacent Isles of *Harries* and *N. Uist*. There are none can catch the Sheep but the Inhabitants, who will pursue them as nimbly, and with as great Freedom, down the steep Descents, as if it were a plain Field.

Their Horses exceed not the Number of 20, all of red Colour, very low and smooth-skinned; and are employed only in carrying their Turf and Corn, and at their Anniversary Cavalcade, of which afterwards.

In this, and the other adjacent little Isles, there are plenty of Wild-fowls and Eggs (but no tame Fowls, as Hens, &c. till of late, their present Minister's Wife, carried a Cock and some Hens there, which was a Wonder to the Inhabitants, who had never seen any before, and said, They, *viz.* the Cock and Hens would put away all their Fowls) insomuch that in the Time of M. Martin's visiting these Isles, they would keep yearly above 20000 young and old Fowls dried, not salted, in their little Stone-houses, of which there are some Hundreds for preserving their Fowls, Eggs, &c. fresh.

The *Solan* Goose, is in Size somewhat less than a Land Goose; their Bill is long, small pointed, and very hard, and pierces an Inch deep into Wood, in their Descent after a Fish laid on a Board, as some use to catch them. When they sleep, they put their Head under

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their

their Wings, but one of them keeps Watch ; if the Centinel observes the Fowler, but not near, he gives Warning, by crying, *Grog, Grog*, at which none of them move ; if he perceives the Danger approaching, he gives Warning, by crying, *Bir Bir*, at which all of them take Wing ; if the Fowler surprize the Centinel (which often happens) all the rest are easily caught by the Neck, one after another. When this Fowl fishes for Herring, it flies about 60 Yards high, and then descends perpendicularly into the Sea, but after all other Fish asquint : The Herrings being in greater Shoals than any other Fish, is said to be the Reason of their so doing.

These Fowls will have strange Battles sometimes, whereof the Reader may take one Instance, as *M. Martin* relates it, p. 7. of his Book, and is as follows, *viz.*

—One of them finding his Neighbour's Nest without the Fowl, lays hold upon the Opportunity, and steals of it as much Grass as he could conveniently carry, taking his Flight towards the Ocean ; from whence he returns after a short Turn, as if he had made a foreign Purchase, but it does not pass for such ;—for the Owner discover'd the Fact, before this Thief got out of Sight, and being too nimble for his Cunning, waits his Return, all armed with Fury, engages him desperately. This bloody Battle was fought above our Heads, and prov'd fatal to the Thief, who fell down dead near our Boat, that our Men took him up, and presently dressed and ate him ; which they reckoned as an Omen and Prognostick of good Success in this (*Mr. Martin* and the rest being yet at Sea) Voyage. Thus he.

St. Kilda People, when the Heavens are not clear, take their Measures for Sailing from the Flight of their Fowls, as from a sure Compass ; Experience shewing that every Tribe bends their Course to their respective Quarters, tho' out of Sight of the Isle : And Strangers have found it exactly to quadrate with a Compass ; the Inhabitants, nevertheless, preferring it to the surest Compass. At other Times, they take their Measures

by

by the Stars. When the Waves are beating with a Noise upon the Rocks, and white, it is ordinarily a Sign of a lasting Storm; but sometimes, in Summer, it is a Sign of excessive Heat approaching.

About two Leagues and a Half to the North of St. Kilda, is a Rock called *Stack-Ly*, 200 Paces in Circumference. One would think it next to impossible to climb this Rock; but St. Kilda Inhabitants do, and have a Pyramid-house upon it for Lodging in, in *August*, to the which a certain Number of them go by *Boats*, to catch the *Solan* Geese, who are very numerous here; and if they were not there then, one windy Day would deprive them of 6 or 7000, the Weather then proving inconstant; this being the Time also they use to take Wing. Those, who are thus sent, act for the Publick Interest; and when they have knock'd on the Head all that may be reached, they carry them to a sharp Point, called the *Casting point*, from whence they throw them into the Sea, until the Boatmen cry, *Enough*; and having got all into the Boat, they return home. After their Arrival, every Man has his Share proportionable to his Lands; and what remains below, belongs to the Officer, as a Branch of his yearly Salary. The Steward told, that they had found a red Coat, a Brass Sun-dial, an Arrow, and some *Molocca* Beans in their Nests. The *Solan* Goose is reckoned the sharpest sighted of all Sea-fowls. They are very plenty upon other Rocks also; as, *Borera*, Half a League from *Stack-Ly*, to the North-east of it: It feeds about 400 Sheep *per Annum*; it is inaccessible, except in one Place, and that in a Calm. Within *Pistol-shot*, and to the West of *Borera*, lies the Rock *Stack-Narmin*; it abounds with *Solan* Geese and other Fowls, where they have many Stone Pyramids (as they have also upon their other Rocks) both for lodging the Inhabitants, and drying their Fowls. They will have many Hundreds of the preceeding Year's *Solan* Geese, with whom, when they return home, the Owners fall to share each Man his own, each having his own particular Mark on the Foot, peculiar to the

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A Description of

The Land-fowls produced here, are Hawks extraordinary good, Eagles, Plovers, Crows, Wrens, Stone-chaker, Craker, Cuckoo ; they fancy that this last is rarely seen there, but on extraordinary Occasions, as the Death of the Proprietor *Mack-Leod*, of the Steward, or the Arrival of some notable Stranger.

The Sea-fowls are first, *Gair-fowl*, the stateliest and largest of all the Fowls here. The *Solan Goose*, as some imagine from the *Irish* Word, *Sou'l-cr*. The Inhabitants are accustomed to drink its Egg raw, finding it, by Experience, to be very pectoral and cephalick. They hatch by Turns ; and when the one returns from Fishing, it has 5 or 6 Herrings in its Gorget, entire and undigested ; upon whose Arrival at the Nest, the hatching Fowl puts its Head in the Fisher's Throat, and pulls them out, as with a Pincer, and that with a great Noise. They pull Grass for their Nests only in windy Days (from their coming in *March*, till the young Fowl is ready to fly in *August* or *September*) these Days being their Vacation time from Fishing, as the Inhabitants say : But they often find a Fatality attending this their Frugality, at least to many of them ; for, after their Fatigue, they often fall asleep, and then the Inhabitants catch them, being ready at Hand to knock them on the Head : Their Food is, *Herring*, *Mackrels* and *Seys* ; *English* Hooks are often found in their Stomachs, tho' there be none used nearer than 20 Leagues distant : Wherever they are (*viz.* the *Solan Geese*) 'tis a sure Sign the Herrings are there, or not far off.

The Tribe of old barren *Solan Geese* have no Nests but have a Dwelling of their own, separate from all others, and meddle not with the hatching, or any other Fowls ; but sympathise and fish together.

The *Solan Geese* are catch'd (besides stealing on them in the Night-time) by Gins of Horse-hair.

There is another Fowl, called *Fulmar* ; it equals the *Malls* of the second rate : 'Tis of the Size of a *Moor-Hen*, and its Egg is larger than a *Solan Goose's* the Shell so tender, that it breaks in Pieces if the

Season proves rainy. If its Egg is once taken away, it lays no more for that Year, as other Fowls do, both a second and third Time: It comes in *November*, always accompanied with boisterous *West-winds*, great Snow, Rain and Hail, and is the only Sea-fowl that stays there all the Year over, except *September*, and Part of *October*. The Inhabitants prefer this to all other: The Old have a delicate Taste, with a Mixture of Fat and Lean; the Young are all Fat, but the Bones; and if 'tis approach'd when ready to take Wing, ejects the Quantity of a Mutchkin of pure Oil out at its Bill, and is sure, therewith, to hit any that attacks it in the Face, tho' 7 Paces distant, for his Defence, as the Inhabitants say: But the Inhabitants are careful to prevent this, by surprising the Fowl behind, having, for this Purpose, a Wooden Dish, fixed to the Ends of their Rods, which they hold before his Bill, as he spouts out the Oil; they surprize him also from behind, by taking hold of his Bill, which they tic with a Thread, and untying it at home let it fall into a Dish: This Oil is sometimes of a reddish, sometimes of a yellow Colour; the Inhabitants and other Islanders put a great Value upon this Oil, and use it as a *Catholicon* for Diseases, especially for any Aching in the Bones, Stitches, &c. Some in the adjacent Isles use it as a Purge, others a Vomiter; it is hot in Quality, and forces its Passage through any Wooden Vessel. It has been successfully used against *Rheumatick Pains*, in *Edinburgh* and *London*: In the latter, it has been used with Success to assuage the Swelling of a strain'd Foot, a Cheek swelled with the Tooth-ach, and for discussing a hard Boil. If the *Fulmar* keeps the Sea, or goes from Land to Sea, 'tis a sure Sign of *West-winds*, blow it at present what Way it will; but it is not expected for some Time if he keeps Land.

The *Scraber*, so called in St. Kilda; in the *Farn Islands*, *Puffinet*; in *Holland*, the *Greenland Dove*; of the Bulk of a Pigeon: It comes in *March* in the Night-time, and is never seen but in the Night: it feeds

feeds on live Whale, and uses Sorrel with it, they say, for both are found in its Nest ; 'tis fat, as the young *Fulmar*.

The *Lavy*, so called by the Inhabitants of *St. Kilda*; by the *Welsh* a *Guillem* : it is near the Bigness of a Duck ; its Egg near the Bulk of a Goose Egg ; it is for ordinary Food preferred to all other Eggs had there, by the Inhabitants : If it stays on Land 3 Days, without Intermission, it is a sign of *Southerly* Wind and fair Weather ; but if it goes to Sea ere the 3d expire, it is then a sign of a Storm.

The *Falk*, so called by the Inhabitants ; the *Rasor-Bill*, in the *West* of *England* ; the *Auk*, in the North ; the *Murre* in *Cornwal*, *Alca Hoeri*. It is a Size less than the *Lavy* : Its Egg in Bigness near to the *Lavy*, or *Guillem* Egg.

The *Bouger*, so called by those in *St. Kilda* ; *Coulterneb*, by those in the *Farn* Islands ; and in *Cornwal*, *Pope* ; it is of the Size of a Pigeon : They breed in Holes under Ground.

The *Affilag*, is as large as a Lintwhite ; it comes about the End of *March*, and goes away in *November*.

There are three Sorts of *Sea-Malls* here : The first near as big as a Goose ; The second considerably less ; The third less than a tame Duck.

The *Firma*, or *Sea-Pie*, by the Inhabitants called *Trikichan* : If it comes in the Beginning of *May*, it is a Sign of a good Summer ; if later, the contrary.

'Tis to be observed of all the Sea fowls here, that they are fatter in Time of Hatching than at other Times: being then well fed with Ease.

Every Fowl lays an Egg Three different Times (except the *Gair Fowl* and *Fulmar*, which lay but one) if the first and second be taken away ; and none but a third that Year ; and only one if not taken away. By which the vast Number of Fowls may be guessed at, if it is considered that they lay but one a Year, if not taken away.

'Tis observed here, that when the *April* Moon goes far in *May*, the Fowls are 10 or 12 Days later in laying.

laying their Eggs, than ordinarily they use to be.

'Tis also observed, by the Inhabitants here, That of these Fowls, there first come over some Spies, or Harbingers, especially of the *Solan-Geese*, tawring about the Islands where the Nests are ; and that when they have made a Review, they fly away, and in 2 or 3 Days after, the whole Tribe are seen coming. Whether the Fowls fly, and where they spend their Winter, the Inhabitants here know not.

The Eggs are found to be of an astringent and windy Quality to Strangers ; but not so to the Inhabitants, who use to eat them from the Nest, Strangers eating greedily of them, become costive and feverish, some had the *Hemorrhoid* Veins swell'd ; the which has cost no little Trouble to bring them to their ordinary Temper, : When a Clyster has been order'd for them of *Segges*, fresh Butter and Salt (which is remembered to have been done but once, then :) and when it had its wished for Effect, the Inhabitants reckoned an extraordinary Performance, they never having seen or heard of any Thing of this Kind before. But as this was the Case with Respect to Eggs and Fowls when Mr. *Martin* did visit the Place ; it is quite altered since, as is seen in a Letter from thence, of the date, *July 30, 1726*, whereof what relates to this, the Reader may see as follows, viz.

Where there were 18 Creels of flecked Eggs, which were given in *Roderick's* Time ; (this *Roderick* was a great Impostor, who was found to have converse with the *Devil*, of whom the Reader may hear more afterwards) there is not one Creel to be got there now ; and I see, says he, where 16 Creels of white Eggs were gathered, they gather but 4 now : This cannot but be a great Loss to the poor Inhabitants, if the Number of Eggs that their Creels or Baskets contain, be considered ; which are, according to Mr. *Martin's* Description of the *Western Islands of Scot.* 1703 Pag. 123, Four hundred big Eggs for the least of them, and the rest 800 and above of lesser Eggs, whereof he says, he has seen them bring home 29 large Baskets in

in a Morning, all full of Eggs ; (and about 200 Sea-fowl, with some Fish, &c.) and the white Eggs and little Sort of Fowls were undervalued in *Roderick's* first Days, (who was there at Mr. *Martin's* visiting that Place) because they had no Need of them ; and now they oftentimes lose their Lives pursuing those little Fowls, by falling down the Rocks into the Sea : Yet these poorer Sort, that take them, must not feed on them, but on Sorrel or Dockens, when boiled together in Summer ; whereby Strength fails them in steep Places, and so many of them are carried home dead, as others fall in the Sea, and not found again.

The Inhabitants of *St. Kilda* do indeed excel all ever observed in Climbing ; they are so dexterous herein, that no Goat can almost equal them, let be excel them. Some Years before Mr. *Martin's* being there, their Boat split upon the West-side of the Isle *Borera*, and they were forced to lay hold on a bare Rock, which was very steep, and above 20 Fathom's high : Notwithstanding this Difficulty, some of them climb'd up to the Top, and from thence let down a Rope and Plaids, and so drew up all the Boat's Crew ; tho' the climbing this Rock would seem impossible to any, except themselves. Also,

Some Years ago, about 20 of their Number happened to be confin'd in the Rock *Stack-Narmin*, which has not any Earth or Grass to cover it, for several Days together, without any Kind of Food : The Season then not favouring their Endeavours to return home, one of their Number plucked all their Knives out of their Hafts, wrought a Hook out of each, and then beat them out to their former Length ; having a Stone for an Anvil, and a Dagger for a Hammer and File ; and with these rude Hooks, and a few sorry Fishing-lines, they purchased Fish for their Maintenance, during their Confinement.

All the Men of the Isle having gone to the Island *Borera* for Purchase, the Rope (whereof they have two, of 24 Fathoms Length each, for the Use of this little Common-wealth, and especially for their Climbing, which

which they do by Turns; these Ropes are all secured round with Cow-hides, well salted, to preserve them from being cut by the Edge of the Rocks) that fastned their Boat, happened to break; and by this Accident, the Boat was quite lost, and the poor People confin'd in the Isle, from the Middle of *March* to the latter End of *May*, without so much as a Crust of Bread; but wanted not Sheep, Fowl and Fish in abundance. In this Case, they were at a Loss how to acquaint their Wives and Friends, that all of them were alive: But, to effect this, they kindled as many Fires on the Top of an Eminence, as there were Men in Number; this was no sooner seen, and the Fires counted, than the Women understood the Signal, and were so overjoyed at this unexpected News (they judging them all to be lost) that they fell to labour the Ground with the Foot-plate, a Fatigue they had never been accustomed to, it being their Mens Work when at Home; and that Year's Product of Corn was the most plentiful that they had for many Years before: After the Steward's Arrival in the Isle, about the End of *May*, he sent his Galley or Birlin, to bring home all the Men confined in the Isle, to their so much longed for St. *Kilda*; where the mutual Joy between them and their Wives, and other Relations, was extraordinary.

These poor People, when they fall from the Rocks, in climbing, (which is frequenter now than formerly, by reason of their Weakness, thro' coarse Feeding, tho' formerly they were reckoned stronger than any of the other Isles about) and perish: Their Wives make doleful Songs on such Occasions, which they call Lamentations. The chief Topicks, or subject Matter of these Elegies, are their Courage, their Dexterity in climbing, and their great Affection which they shew'd to their Wives and Children.

By their Climbing they run very great Hazards, as may be conceived by what's above related. One of them, as he was walking barefooted along the Rocks, where he had fixed his Gin, he happened to put his great Toe in a Noose, and thereby stumbling, immediately fell down the

the Rock, but hung by the Toe, the Gin being strong enough to hold him, and the Stones that secured it on each End being heavy, the poor Man continued hanging thus for the space of a Night, on a Rock 20 Fathoms high above the Sea, until one of his Neighbours, hearing him cry in the Morning, came to his Rescue, who drew him up by the Feet, and so saved him.

It is ordinary with a Fowler, after he has got his Purchase of Fowls, to pluck the fattest, and carry it home to his Wife, if married, or to his Sweet-heart, if a Batchellor, in token of his Affection; and this is called the Rock-fowl: And it is the greatest Present thy can make, considering the Danger they run in acquiring it.

The Richest Man in *St. Kilda* has not above 8 Cows, 2 or 3 Horses, and 80 Sheep. If a Native here have but a few Cattle, he will marry a Woman, tho' she have no Portion of her Friends, but a Pound of Horse-hair, to make a Gin to catch Fowls. They regard no Portion nor Parentage, for marrying a Woman, in respect of a good Servant. The finest Hawks in the western Isles are here.

There is plenty of Cod and Ling, of a great Size, round this Isle; the Improvement of which might be of great Advantage.

The Inhabitants speak the *Irish* Tongue only; they express themselves slowly, but pertinently, and have the same Language with those of *Harries* and other Isles who retain the *Irish* in its Purity.

Their common Habit anciently was of Sheep-skins: The Men now, or some 20 Years before, wear a short Doublet reaching to the Waste, and a Plaid folded above it, which is fastned before with a *Fulmar's* Bone, girded about their Middle with a leathern Belt; they wear Capes of the same Colour and Shape with the *Capuchins*, but shorter, and Bonnets on the Lord's Day; but the poorer Cloth Capes: Some of them now have got Breeches, they are wide and open at the Knees; they wear Cloth Hose, and some knit upon Wires since their present Minister's Wife went there; for
none

none other there could knit them, neither knew they of any such Stockins ere her Time. They go bare footed and legged in Summer-time. Their Leather is dressed with the Roots of *Tormentil*.

The Women there wear upon their Heads a Linen Dress of the Form of our *Northern Highland* Womens Curtchess, and a small Lock of Hair hanging down each Cheek, knotted at the lower End: They have a Plaid for their upper Garment fastned with a *Brotch* of Brass about the Collar-bone. The Steward's Wife had her *Brotch* of Silver anciently; but neither the Dress nor Buckle is used by her now. Their ordinary Shoes are made of the Necks of the *Solan* Geese, cut above the Eyes, the Crown of the Head serving for the Heel, the whole Skin being cut clos at the Breast, which End being sewed for the Toes, the Foot enters into it, as into a Piece of narrow Stockin; it lasts not above 5 Days, and if the Down-side is next to the Ground, not above 3 or 4 Days. Both Sexes wear Plaiding or coarse Flannel Shirts, but put them off when they go to Bed: They thicken their Cloth upon *Flakes* of Rods, or Mats of Hay twisted and woven together in small Ropes; they work hard at this Employment, first making use of their Hands, and at last of their Feet; and when they are at this Work, they commonly sing all the Time, one of their Number acting the Part of a prime Chantress, whom all the rest follow and obey. Their ordinary Bread is Barley bread, or this Meal with some Oat Meal mixed and baken.

They have no Mill going by Wind or Water in all the Country to grind their Corn, but Hand-mills; which are a Pair of Stones, in Form of Millstones, or Grind-stones, about two Foot over: They use to spread a Cloth (made of Wool, or Straw) or a Sheep-skin on the Ground, to receive the Meal, and lay their little Millstones, called *Quairns*, thereon, the upper Stone having a Hole at the Center to let in the Corn, and a Stick, about 6 Inches long and an Inch thick, fixed in the Middle of the Semidiameter, betwixt the Center

A Description of

Center and utmost Edge, for an Handle : So one fits down with a Leg on each Side of the Quairns, who with one Hand turns the upper Quairn, and with the other feeds in the Corn or Barley ; the Meal all the While issuing out around the Quairns. Of these Quairns every Family, that is able, provides a Pair, and the poorer sort borrow. They have only one Kiln in the Isle, which is common to all, for drying their Corn : But often they burn the Straw of unthreshed Oats, whereby the Oats are sufficiently dried, without Use of the Kiln.

There is no Smith in the Island, nor Shoe-maker, nor Taylor, and but two Weavers, who serve to weave their coarse woollen Cloth ; for they have no Flax in all their Lands. Sometimes the Steward brings a Taylor with him, who makes Clothes to such as employ him ; Others do the best they can for themselves.

One of the Inhabitants of *St. Kilda* being Wind-bound, once, in the Isle of *Harries*, was prevailed on by some of them that traded to *Glasgow*, to go thither with them. He was astonished at the Length of the Voyage, and of the great Kingdoms, as he thought them, that is, Isles by which they sail'd ; the largest in his Way did not exceed 24 Miles in Length, but he considered them comparatively, with his own little native Country. Upon his Arrival at *Glasgow*, he was like one that dropt from the Clouds, into a new World ; whose Language, Habit, &c. were in all Respects new to him ; he never imagined that such big Houses of Stone were made with Hands ; and for the Pavements of the Streets, he thought it must needs be altogether natural ; for he could not believe that Men would be at the Pains to beat Stones into the Ground to walk upon. He stood dumb at the Door of his Lodging with the greatest Admiration ; and when he saw a Coach and 2 Horses, he thought it to be a little House they were drawing at their Tail, with Men in it ; but he condemned the Coachman for a Fool to sit so uneasy, for he thought it safer on the Back of one of the Horses. The Mechanism of the Coach-wheel,

wheel, and its running about, was the greatest of all his Wonders.

When he went thro' the Streets, he desired to have one to lead him by the Hand. *Thomas Ross* a Merchant, and others, that took the Diversion to carry him thro' the Town, ask'd his Opinion of the high Church ? He answered, that it was a large Rock ; that there were some in St. *Kilda* much higher, but that these were the best Coves he ever saw ; for that was the Idea he conceived of the Pillars and Arches upon which the Church stands. When they carry'd him into the Church, he was yet more surpris'd, and held up his Hands with Admiration, wondring how it was possible for Men to build such a prodigious Fabrick, which he supposed to be the largest in the Universe. He could not imagine what the Pews were designed for : He fancied that the People that wore Masks (not knowing whether they were Men or Women) had been guilty of some ill thing, for which they dar'd not show their Faces. He was amaz'd at Womens wearing Patches, and fancied them to have been Blisters. Pendants seemed to him the most ridiculous of all things : He condemned Piriwigs mightily, and much more the Powder us'd in them ; in fine, he condemn'd all Things as superfluous he saw not in his own Country. He look'd with Amazement, almost on every Thing, all being new to him. When he heard the Church Bells ring, he was under a mighty Consternation, as if the Fabrick of the World had been in great Disorder. He did not think there had been so many People in the World, as in the City of *Glasgow* ; and it was a great Mystery to him, to think what they could all design by living so many in one Place. He wondred how they could all be furnished with Provision ; and when he saw big Loaves, he could not tell whether they were Bread, Stone, or Wood. He was amaz'd to think how they could be provided with Ale, for he never saw any there that drank Water (They have no Ale, Beer, nor other Liquors in St. *Kilda*) for more than 20 Years. Yet,

M. Martin

M. *Martin*, in his Book of *St. Kilda* 1698, tells us, Pag. 114. of their brewing Ale, but rarely; and for Barm, they use the Juice of Nettle-Roots, which they put into a Dish with a little Barley-meal Dough; these Sowens, (*i. e.* Flummery) being blended together, produce a good Yest, which puts their Wort into a Ferment, and makes good Ale, so that when they drink plentifully of it, it disposes them to dance merrily. Their common Drink is Water, or Whey.

The *St. Kilda* Man at *Glasgow*, wondred how they made them fine Clothes, and to see Stockins made without being first cut, and afterwards sewed, was no small Wonder to him. He thought it foolish in a Woman to wear thin Silks, as being a very improper Habit for such as pretended to any sort of Employment. When he saw the Womens Feet, he judged them to be of another shape than those of the Men, because of the different shape of their Shoes. He did not approve of the Heels of Shoes worn by Men or Women; and when he observed Horses with Shoes on their Feet, and fastned with Iron Nails, he could not forbear Laughing, and thought it the most ridiculous Thing that fell under his Observation. He long'd to see his native Country again; and passionately wished it were blessed with Ale, Brandy, and Tobacco, (of which last they are great Lovers) and Iron, as *Glasgow* was.

There are some Eagles there, which sometimes do them Harm, by taking away some of their Sheep, and Lambs; tho' M. *Martin*, in his Time, says, that they touched nothing there, but made their Purchase in the adjacent Isles and Continent.

Their Way of getting Fire in *Martin's* Time, when they went to the lesser Isles, was by a Steel, Flint and Tinder, which an Inhabitant furnished them, for which he had a Tax, or Gratuity allowed him, called by them, the *Fire-penny*; which *Martin* relieved them of, he says, by shewing them how to fetch Fire from the Chrystal-rocks; which was surprizing to them:

them: But for this they have a better Way now, *viz.* by carrying Fire with them in a Pot, which the Inhabitants furnish by Turns; wherefore the Furnisher has Allowance, called the *Pot-Penny*. They have no Money here, but do buy or sell by Barter. The Inhabitants here contract a Cough sometimes when strangers come among them and stay for any Time, which continues some 8 or 10 Days; with this the Infants upon the Breast are infected, as has been observed.

In *Martin's* Time, they fed much on Fowl (they then being so plenty) especially the *Solan* Goose, *Puffin* and *Fulmar*, but eat no Salt with them; which, then, was judged to be the Cause of a Leprosy that broke out among them: And he says, The Year after his being there, 12 of them died of this Distemper; and were in the same Condition with a Man there, who feeding the same way, became corpulent, and his Throat almost closed; whom Mr. *Martin* advised to eat Salt with his Meat, to exercise himself in the Fields, and forbear eating fat Fowl, and the Pudding called *Giben*, (*i. e.* the Fat of their Fowls, with which they stuff the Stomach or Belly of the *Solan* Goose, in Fashion of a Pudding; this they put in the Infusion of Oat-meal, which they call *Brochan*) and bade him eat Sorrel; who, when with difficulty he was perswaded to do it, in a few Days, says he, his Voice was much clearer, his Appetite recovered, and he in a fair Way of Recovery, But,

The Case is now altered, as is seen in the Letter above-mentioned, wherein it is found, That the Writer is affected and afflicted to see the poor People in their extreme Poverty driven to eat unclean Meats, which breeds unclean diseases, whereof, he says, he has seen more than twenty die. And further,

'Tis otherwise found, That the Writer of the above Paragraph, by his interposing and using his best Endeavours with the Tutors of the Laird of *Mack-Leod*,
who

who is Proprietor of this Isle, as Occasion offered him; and with the Baillie or Steward, who at present is one called *John Mack-Leod*, and lives all the Winter in another Isle called *Paba*, with his Family, and such as he is pleased to take along with him: And during their Abode in the Island, the Natives are taken up in climbing the Rocks, catching Fowls, and taking Eggs; and the Steward disposes of such Merchandise as he takes along with him, and receives therefore of the Product of the Island. They pay the Value of 20 Pence for the Peck of Salt, and the like for a Pound of coarse Tobacco, and so proportionally for other Things; and, by reason of their great Distance and Poverty, no other but the Steward and his Retinue ever comes to that Place; and seldom or never does any of the Natives come out of that Island, so that 'tis little they can know of the World, and upon many Accounts are much to be pitied: They are in a Manner Prisoners, yea worse, all things being considered; Prisoners in other Places have the Advantage of Visits from Friends, and Converse with them, and Christian Comfort in their Distress, and other Assistance, which that poor People have not for the greatest Part of the Year, except when the Steward and his Followers come among them to demand his Rents, *viz.* Down, Wool, Butter, Cheese, Cows, Sheep, Fowls, Oil, &c. And they look upon that Visit as no great Advantage to them, seeing they are kept in continual Trouble while the Steward is among them, and they very much grudge what he carries away with him, and that they must all the Year be toiling for Others; and yet they are not singular in this: But they know not the circumstances of Others in the World, and even in the same Nation, as to that Particular, who are in the same Case with themselves. However they complain of the Steward among themselves, they gather together in his Absence, and must

must produce, if Butter and Cheese, at his Return the ensuing Year; and for this End he has a Deputy always on the Place, called the *Officer*, and is one of the Natives; he has free Lands from the Steward, and is at present the richest Man in the Island, having about Twenty Cows, if not mo, (the rest having only as is above narrated) and 2 or 300 Sheep. So that, by what is here hinted, these People must be thought to be in a very bad Condition, as indeed they are.

The Soil here is very grateful, if they can get a Competency of Dung to it, producing ordinarily 16, 18 or 20 Fold sometimes; their Grain is only Bear and some Oats; the Barley the largest in the *Western Isles*; they have no Plough, but Spades, for labouring; their Harrows are of Wood, and their Teeth in the Front also, and all the rest supplied with Tangles of Sea-ware tied to the Harrow by the small Ends; the Roots hanging loose behind, scatter the Clods broken by the wooden Teeth; they are forced to use this for want of Wood. The chief Ingredient in their Composts (*i. e.* Dung for their arable Land) is, Ashes of Turf mixed with Straw, mixing their Urine therewith, as it comes from the Fountain, that being most advantageous; which, by Experience, they find to have much of the vegetable Nitre: They sow very thick: They pluck their Bear by the Roots in Handfuls, instead of shearing it with Hooks. The Corn produced by this their Compost is perfectly free of any Kind of Weeds; it produces much Sorrel, where the Compost reaches.

They divide their Lands each three Years, as is said, and that for the Benefit of the bad Labourers; who get from their Neighbours fat well manured Ground, for his bad; and the other says he will make that bad Land yield as well as the other, by dunging and delving it well.

Their arable Land is very nicely parted into Ten Divisions, and these into Subdivisions, each Division distinguished by the Name of some deceased Man or Woman, who were natives of the Place; there is one Spot called *Multa Terra*, another *Multis Agris*.

They are very exact in their Properties, and divide both the Fishing, as well as Fowling, Rocks, with as great Niceness as they do their Corn and Grass; one will not allow his Neighbour to sit and fish on his Seat in the Boat, for this being a Part of his Possession, he will take Care that no Encroachment be made upon the least Part of it, and this with a particular regard to their Successors, that they may lose no Privilege depending upon any Parcel of their Farm. They have but one Boat in the Isle, and every Man hath a Share in it, proportionably to the Acres of Ground for which they pay Rent. They are stout Rowers, and will tug at the Oar for a long Time, without any Intermision: But are bad Travellers. They stick very close to their ancient Laws and Statutes; nor will they by any Means consent to alter their first (tho' unreasonable) Constitutions; An Instance hereof is, they have unchangeably continued their first and ancient Measures, as the *Maile*, *Amir*, and *Cubit*: The *Maile* contains 10 Pecks, the *Amir* 2 Pecks; the *Cubit*, or in their Language, *Lave Keile*, i. e. an Hand of Wood, is the Distance from the Elbow to the Finger's End; this they only use in measuring their Boats: The *Amir* has been used this 100 Years, whereby 'tis become considerably less; to compensate which Loss, the *Steward*, for his Part, will have (from a pretended Custom received someway) the Measurer of the Corn, to hold his Hand at the *Amir* Side, to hold some Bayley above the due Measure; but the Inhabitants will not allow of it, it being to them unreasonable. Also,

Another Instance some Years before Mr. *Martin*, so often mentioned above, is; The *Steward* then, determined to exact a Sheep from each Family in the Isle, the Number amounting to 27; and for this he put them in Mind of a late Precedent, of their having given the like Number to his Predecessor. But they answered, That what they gave then, was voluntary, and upon an extraordinary Occasion, of his being Wind-bound in the Isle; and that this was not to be a Custom afterwards.

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(The which Reasoning was very good, and One would think, that their Kindness, then, deserv'd a gratefuller Requital.) However, the Steward sent his Brothet, with a competent Number of Men, to take the Sheep from them by Force ; but the Natives, arming themselves with their Daggers and Fishing-rods, attack'd the Steward's Brother, giving him some Blows on the Head, and forc'd him to retire *re infecta*; they telling him, that they would pay no new Taxes: And, by this stout Resistance, they preserv'd their Freedom from such Imposition, at that Time. But the Steward has got it fix'd since, so as every Family pays it, if he have 20 Sheep, he taking one of every 20 from them.

But so great was their Concern for this *Amir* above-mentioned, that they unanimously determined to send the Officer as Envoy (according to the ancient Custom) to represent their Case to *Mack Leod*: This was the Result of a general Council, in which the Master of every Family has a Vote, since every Family pays this Officer an *Amir* of Barley *per Annum*, to maintain his Character.

If a Man leave the Door of his *Cleit* (*i. e.* Cote-house) half-open, and a Sheep of his Neighbour's go in thereat, and die therein ; the Owner of the *Cleit* must make it good, in paying the Sheep. If the Door be quite open, and Access be had out, as well as in, he is free ; Or, if he has Witnesses that he closed the Door, he is free, tho' several Sheep died in his *Cleit*. If One have the Door half-open, and Cows goes in thereat ; if then one Cow kill another, the Owner of the living Cow must make it good, and the dead Cow is his own, If one Cow cast another down a steep Rock or Brae, and so be kill'd ; then, they say, the Half of the dead Cow is blemished on the Brae ; for, were she on a Plain, she would fight for herself : Wherefore the living and dead Cows are equally divided betwixt their Owners. When they go to take Sheep in the steep Rocks, if any of them fall down the Rocks and are kill'd, or fall or run into the Sea in chasing them ; the Pursuers must pay each his Share, proportionable to his

his Ability, of the Sheep so lost: So, if one Man engages to chase alone, he pays the whole Loss; If Two chase them, he that hath most Sheep of them Two, repays the Loss, if there be any, Sheep for Sheep; and the Other pays him the Half in again, in Barley. They reckon the Price of a Sheep with the Lamb, two Merks, at *Belton* 20 Pence, at *Lambmas* without a Lamb 16 Pence, at *Hallowmas* 18 Pence: But 'tis frequently paid in Barley, when there are 5 or 6 Men about the Loss, and the Corn not scarce; If they want Corn, they rather take Barley. If one find a young Lamb that has lost its Dam, and another prove the Lamb to be his, (the Mother refusing it Suck, by being away for some Time) he that found it must make it good to the Owner, if it die, or be lost. Wherefore, one Man will not suffer another to go through his Sheep in the Fields, till he and others that have Sheep be present, especially in Lambing-time: Or, if any will go through his own and Neighbour's Sheep, and they but move, and happen to fall from the Rocks, he must make all good; except Witnesses be near to testify that none of them moved or fell till he was quite by them. If One leave his Sheep well to Day, and any Other pass thro' them after him that Day, or the next, if thereafter he miss one or mo of them, he must re-found them, except he have Witnesses to attest his being free of that deed, or give his Oath of Knowledge for that Effect. So he that goes thus, without Witnesses, is always censured. But there seldom falls out any Strife among them (for they are generally very subject and submissive to their own Laws) except in dividing the Effects of the Dead; and when any Thing thus happens, it is left to the Baillie's Decision, according to their Laws. And they are so strict in their Credit, that the poor Debitor will be obliged to give in Payment what he cannot spare, and will not be allow'd to offer what is most common in Traffick among them.

The Officer, as such, is obliged to adjust the respective Proportion of Lands, Grass, and Rocks, and what

what else could be claim'd by Virtue of the last Tack or Lease, which is never longer than for 3 Years condescended to by the Steward: Also, he is obliged always to dispute with the Steward for what is due to any of them, and never to give over until he has obtain'd his Demand, or put him into such a Passion, that he gives the Officer, at least, 3 Strokes on the Head, with his Cudgel; after which, he has done, having performed what's required by the ancient Customs: But he is not dispensed with, if the Strokes amount not to Three; as the Steward and Inhabitants both say, according to Mr. *Martin*,

He has some Acres of Land given him by the Steward for serving him and the Inhabitants, and the Bonnet worn by himself at his leaving the Island; the Steward's Wife leaves with the Officer's the Head-dress worn by herself, with a Pound of Indigo.

Their *Meire*, which imports an Officer, was anciently chosen, or at least approved by the People, ere the Steward settled him in his Office; but now the Stewards have the Nomination of him absolutely: He is President over them in their Debates, takes Care that the Lots be managed impartially, that none to whose Share they may fall may have Cause to repine, whether it be for the Steward's Service, or the Common-wealth's. The Use of the Lots, together with the Crucifix, do mightily contribute to their Peace and Quiet, keeping every One within his proper Bounds; and indeed it must be a very odd Case that falls not within the Compass of these two to determine. When any Case cannot be decided by the Lots, and is decideable only by the Oaths of the Parties, then the Crucifix must determine the Matter; and if it should prove a Case of the highest Importance, any of them is at Liberty to refer it to his Neighbour's Oath, without any Suspicion of Perjury, providing the Ceremony of Touching the Crucifix with their Right-hand be observed; and this is always publickly performed, as says *Martin*. But this superstitious Custom,

stom, as well as others, is done away since Mr. *Buchan* their Minister came among them.

If any Man is guilty of beating his Neighbour, he is liable to a Fine, not exceeding the Value of 2 *shil. Sterl.* except there be Blood drawn, and then it is 4 *sh. 6 d.* but at the Steward's Pleasure to exact them or not, for to him all the Complaints are given in at his Arrival, by the Officer. But they agree harmoniously together generally, and seldom it is that Strife or Debates happen among them; which is to the Praise of the Great Creator's good Providence, if their Rudeness and Ignorance be compared with the more intelligent World.

This their Officer, as a Point of his Honour, must be the First that lands in the lesser Isles and Rocks; which Point of Honour exposes him to frequent Dangers: For when they come near the Landing-Rock, he catches the first Opportunity of the calmest Wave, and (having a Rope tied about his Middle, with the other End fasten'd to the Boat in case of Danger) jumps out upon the Rock: If he lands safe, he fixes his Feet in a secure Place, and with his Rope draws all the Crew to him, except those whose Turn it is to look after the Boat; but if in Jumping he falls into the Sea (as some Times he does) then he is drawn in again by the Rope, and the next, whose Turn it is, must try his Fortune; the former not being oblig'd to hazard himself again at this Time.

Their Boat is curiously divided into Apartments, proportionable to their Lands and Rocks; and this is distinguished to a Hair's-breadth, that One cannot encroach upon another's Privilege.

Their Officer, in his Embassy, once travelled as far as to land on the Continent next to *Skye*, (and it was a long Journey for a Native of *St. Kilda* so to do, for scarce any of the Inhabitants ever have the Opportunity of travelling so far) where he observed many wonderful Things in his Way. But he and the Islanders look on *MackLeod's* Family to be equivalent to that of an Imperial Court, and the King to be only Super-

rior to him. It was impossible for him, or these with him to describe the strange Lowland Dress his Lady wore; they admired Glass-windows, and a Looking-glass to them was a Prodigy: they were amazed when they saw Cloth-hangings upon a thick Stone-wall, and condemn'd it as a Thing very vain and superfluous.

One of their Number landing in the Isle of *Harries*, enquired who was the Proprietor of these Lands? They told him it was *MacLeod*, which did not a little raise his Opinion of him. This Man afterwards, when he was in the Isle of *Skye*, and had travelled some Miles there, on Day standing upon an Eminence, and looking round about him, he fancied he saw a great Part of the World; and then enquired to whom those Lands did belong; one of the Company told him *Mac-Leod* was Master of these Lands also; the *St. Kilda* Man, lifting up his Eyes and Hands to Heaven, cried out with Admiration, *O mighty Prince, who art Master of such vast Territories!* This he express'd so emphatically in the *Irish* Language, that it became a Proverb afterwards, when One would express a Greatness and Plenitude of Power. One of the Things he, and they with him, wondred at most, was the Growth of Trees; they thought the Beauty of Leaves and Branches admirable, and how they grew to such a Height above Plants was far above their Conception. For there grow no Trees, no not so much as a Shrub in *St. Kilda*.

One of their Number having travelled in the Isle of *Skye*, to the South Part of it, thought this a prodigious Journey; and seeing in the opposite Continent the Shire of *Inverness* divided from *Skye* only by a narrow Sea, enquired of the Company, if that were the Border of *England*.

One of the *St. Kilda* Men, after he had taken a pretty large Dose of *Aqua-vitæ*, and was become very heavy with it, as he was falling into a Sleep, and fancying it was to have been his Last, expressed to his Companions the great Satisfaction he had in meeting with such an easy Passage out of this World; *For*, said he, *it is attended with no Kind of Pain.* In short says

Martin

Martin here, their Opinion of foreign Objects is as remote from the ordinary Sentiments of other Mankind, as they are themselves from all foreign Converse.

For Divertisement, the Inhabitants ride their Horses at the Anniversary Cavalcade of *Michaelmas*; this they never fail to observe. They begin at the Shoar, and ride as far as the Houses; they use no Saddles of any Kind, nor Bridle, but a Rope of Straw, which manages the Horses Head; and when they have all taken the Horses by Turns, the Show is over for that Time. These superstitious Days they observe very punctually, they being at certain set Times, and they call them Holy-days; but can give no Reason for this Observance, other than practical Antiquity; on which they will also be very jovial in Singing, Dancing, and Feasting.

Their Diversions are short Clubs and Balls of Wood. The Sand is a fair Field for this Sport and Exercise, in which they take great Pleasure, and are very nimble at it; they play for some Eggs, Fowls, Hooks or Tobacco; and so eager are they for Victory, that they strip themselves to their Shirts to obtain it: They use Swimming and Diving, and are very expert in both.

The Women have their Assemblies in the Middle of the Village, where they discourse of their Affairs, but in the mean Time employing their Distaff, and spinning in Order to make their Blankets; they sing and jest for Diversion, and in their Way understand Poetry, and make Rhimes in their Language; both Sexes having a Genius herefore; and both are very courteous.

Both Sexes have a great Inclination to Novelty, and perhaps, any Thing may be thought new with them, that is but different from their Way of Managing Land, Cattel, Fowls, &c. But above all, Writing was to them most astonishing; they could not conceive how it is possible for any Mortal to express the Conceptions of the Mind in such black Characters upon white Paper. After they would admirably argue upon the Subject, and were told, that within the Space of two

Years, or less if they pleased, they might be taught to read and write; but if they were not of the Opinion that either of them could be obtained, at least by them in an Age (as Mr. *Martin* relates) tho' they do know the contrary hereof by Experience now, blessed be God, as may be hinted at afterwards.

Their Way of celebrating, & solemnizing their Marriages was thus, *viz.* When the Parties are agreed to match one with another, as Man and Wife, then, the common Officer that presides over them, summons all the Inhabitants of both Sexes to a Chappel near the Town, called *Christ's Chappel*, where being assembled, he, *viz.* the Officer, or any other appointed to marry them, after they are caused to be presented to the Marriage-stool, enquires publicly if there be any Impediment why these Parties should not be joined in the Bond of Matrimony? And if there be no Objection to the contrary, he then enquires of the Parties, if they are resolved to live together in Well and Woe, &c. After their Assent, (he taking out his Durk naked, and thereupon causing them to swear it) he declares them married Persons; and then desires them to ratify this their solemn Promise in the Presence of God and the People, in order to which the *Crucifix* is tendred to them, and both put their Right-hands upon it, as the Ceremony by which they swear Fidelity one to another during their Life-time. In this Manner, Mr. *John Campbell* Minister of *Harries* (to whom *Mack-Leod* the Proprietor of the Isle heartily recommended the Care of the Inhabitants of St. *Kilda*) married 15 Pair on the 17th of *June* 1697, as Mr. *Martin* relates, who was there with Mr. *Campbel*, tho' both resided there but about 20 Days. But this Way of Marrying is now quite abolished. Immediately after Marriage, they take a Country-Dance, having a Bagpipe for their Musick, which pleases them exceedingly. The Richer Sort give their Help, at this Time, to the Poorer, to enrich their Stock, *viz.* by giving the married Parties some of their Cattle; others, Seed to sow their Land, &c. The Men are generally scarcer than the Women, which

is mainly attributed to their Climbing, whereby many of them are killed, by falling from the Rocks, or drowned in the Sea. Also,

Their Manner of burying their Dead of old was thus, *viz*, When One dies, they give a Cry through the whole Island, that all the People at Work, whether in Field or Mountain, may thereupon come home. And indeed they seem to have a great Regard for the Dead, they all abstaining from ordinary Work till the Corps is interr'd, which they keep out of the Ground but for one Day only. The Time of the Funerals, the Gentlemen and Commonalty are entertained with a good deal of Civility; these concerned with the Corps giving them what the Isle affords, and their Circumstances can allow; and also, friendly Compliments sent to the Houses of those that watch the Corps, and make the Grave. At interring the Corps, they are so mindful of Mortality, Judgment, and a future Life, that they all draw to a Side, take off their Bonnets, and the Poor, their Capes made of Cloth, and say Prayers; therein humbly craving, That the Lord would prepare them for that State. The which may serve for a sharp Reproof to (and, if not taken and duly improven, will be a Witness against) many; who, notwithstanding of their better Education, and having by the Gospel been taught better Things, yet act far otherwise, and much more discommendably, at such Occasions. They esteem the Grave, where the Corps of the Dead is to be interred, so sacred a Bed, that they set a Person at each End of it, that no Dog, Cat, or other Brute-Creature, approach to, nor cross over the same. After Prayers a Snuff-box or two goes round the best-respected: and the Poor get only a Pen-full or two in their Palms, especially if in Haste to be away.

The Women also have a superstitious Custom, when they meet with any cross Providence, That they go ordinarily to the Grave-stone of their Husband, or nearest Relation, and there weep and howl. But now they, as also the Men, are much reformed from this and their other foolish and mimical Observances, since they

they have been blessed with a Gospel-Minister of their own : Upon these Occasions, he would go to them, and give them the Substance of the 5th of the *Romans*, or what was found fittest for the Purpose ; so that now, seeing the Madnes of these their foolish Ways, they have much abandoned them, and come to a better Mind. The Foresaid says, He never saw them make a Grave or bury their Dead on the odd Day of the Year. Also, out of a groundless (tho' superstitious) Fancy that their Children will live by baptizing them on *Saturday*, they did it all then ; yet they see it has not the wished for Effect : Which Custom is now also done away. Also, lately, the Minister having approach'd the Grave nearer than his usual, he espied one of the Tenants using some superstitious Motions, which he took not heed to, until he took up a Spade, and lifted as much Earth of the Grave, as would fill a Child's Hand or Fist, and then did spit a little in the Grave, and threw in the little Quantity of Earth he had on the Spade into the Grave ; all which he did the 2d or 3d Time. All the Reason he had from him or others was, That they are obliged to do it for Antiquity or Custom's Sake.

As for their Religion,

Mr. *Martin* says, They are Christians (in his Book printed 1698, pag. 82.) much of the primitive Temper, neither inclined to Enthusiasm nor Popery ; and they leave off working after Twelve o'Clock on *Saturday*, as being an ancient Custom delivered down to them from their Ancestors, and go no more to it till *Monday* Morning. And pag. 83. he says, They believe in *God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* ; and a State of future Happiness and Misery ; and that all Events, whether good or bad, are determined by GOD : They use a set Form of Prayer at the hoisting of their Sails : They lye down, rise and begin their Labours in the Name of GOD. They have a Notion that Spirits are embodied ; these they fancy to be locally in Rocks, Hills, and wherever they list, in one Instant, says *Martin* : But they are now better taught, and believe

otherwise. And in his Book printed 1703, Pag. 287. says, They are of the Reformed Religion. But as for what Kind of a reformed Religion, and what Kind of primitive *Christian* Temper Mr. *Martin* means, the Reader may judge, by the Superstructure they raised upon this their Belief of the Trinity of Persons in the God-head, (and that as Mr. *Martin* relates it) both by the Sequel, and in Part, by what is already said above. Yet, it may not be amiss, and, perhaps, not unacceptable to the Reader, to show what Way they were first christianized, according to the best Account that can be had of it, which take as follows, *viz.*

'Tis commonly reported by the Natives, and others more concerned in this Affair, that about the Beginning of the last Century or thereabout, there happened to be One in St. *Kilda*, who went under the Name of a Popish-Priest; but was so ignorant that he was not capable to teach them the Repetition of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and Ten Commandments, aright; yet was this nominal Priest it seems skilful enough to teach these poor ignorant People, who then might receive any Impress, Superstition and Idolatry, by giving them Beads, Images, Observing of superstitious Days, erecting idolatrous Monuments, &c. among them: With this Teacher and Religion they continued until the *Irish* Rebellion, which broke out in the Year 1641, where there was one *Coll Mackdonald*, alias *Ketoch*, (for he lost his Right-hand in the then Wars, whose Son called *Alaster Mackdonald* was slain the following *Irish* Rebellion) a Commander in chief of the *Irish* Army, & was of the *Mackdonalds* in *Ireland*, or of the Family of *Antrim*, the *Mackdonald's* Chief there; this *Coll Macdonald*, alias *Ketoch*, being defeat in Battle, losing his Right-hand, and his Army, which he had raised for the Popish Interest, rooted, was forced, with a few to flee for his Life, and getting his Foot in a Vessel, comes to Land in St. *Kilda*, whom, when the Inhabitants saw, they run away from him, and his Men, into a Cave in some remote Corner of the Island, where they thought they might be most safe from him, whom they

they thought to be an Enemy come to destroy them; but he sending some few of his Men after them, told them of his friendly Designs, and he himself advancing gradually, enforces what his Men had said, by telling them he had no hostile Design against them, and that tho' he had, he was not in Condition to effect it, since he wanted the Right-hand (shewing them the Stump;) so pulling out his Mill, and giving them a Snuff, with which, and some other Significations of Kindness, they came to be delivered of their former Fears; so that he lived in Safety and Quietness with them for the Space of three Quarters of a Year: This *Coll Mackdonald*, at Length examining them of their Religion and Principles, found that the Priest was very ignorant, and had not taught the People the Lord's Prayer, Decalogue and Creed aright: So rebuking the Priest, he corrected this, by causing them repeat these aright: He likewise established them in their superstitious and idolatrous Practices, being himself a bigotted *Papist*. The poor People, judging the Priest to be in the Wrong, and looking on him to be ignorant, resolved to depose him; for the Doing whereof, they referred it to the Sentiment of this *Coll Mackdonald*, whether they should do it or not; but this *Coll* put them off such Thoughts, by telling them, he never saw a Priest deposed in his Country for Ignorance; with this and other such like reasonless Reasons they were satisfied. And this was all the Religion they had till the Year 1697, when Mr. *John Campbel* Minister of *Harries*, and M. *Martin*, came to them, who continued only about 20 Days among them, as was hinted above; in which little time, he did doubtless good among them; for he greatly disproved their superstitious and idolatrous Kind of Worship, and taught them otherwise, as his little Time there would allow; also he threw down severals of their Statues and Altars, (being no Doubt assisted hereto by Mr. *Martin*, the Steward and his Men) at the which they were highly offended, and did upbraid him therefore; and said to him, that some sad Judgment would befall him for his so Doing;

so wedded were they to these Abominations : Whereby it may appear, that tho' he got of their material Monuments of Idolatry thrown down, yet the spiritual Ones which were erected in their Hearts were not touched, as their present Minister, Mr. *Alexander Buchan*, found at his first settling there among them ; whereof the Reader may hear afterwards. But,

First, it may be shown the Reader what Account Mr. *Martin* gives of their Reformation, and what it is he reckons the primitive Christian (but rather Antichristian) Temper to be : Which take as he relates it in his Book intituled, *A late Voyage to St. Kilda*, printed London 1698. Pag 85.

They observe, says he, the Festivals of *Christmas, Easter, Good-Friday*, *St. Columba's Day*, & that of *All Saints* ; upon this they have an Anniversary Cavalcade. But this is a Mistake ; for their Cavalcade is at *Michaelmas*. In his Book intituled, *A Description of the Western Isles of SCOTLAND*, printed London 1703, Pag. 287. says, They assemble in the Churchyard, on the Lord's Day, and in the Morning they say the Lord's Prayer, Creed and Ten Commandments : They work at no Imployment till *Monday*, neither will they allow a Stranger to work sooner. This is all the Worship on, and Observance of, the Lord's Day they have, as Mr. *Martin* tells us.

As to their Manner of Baptizing (in his Book printed 1698, and Pag. 91.) he tells us, The Parent calls in the Officer, or any of his Neighbours, to baptize his Child, and another to be Sponsor : He that performs the Minister's Part, being told what the Child's Name is to be, says, *A. B. I baptize you to your Father and your Mother, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* ; then the Sponsor takes the Child in his Arms, as doth his Wife as God-mother ; and, ever after this, there is a Friendship between the Parent and Sponsor.

As to Swearing, he says thus, viz.

They swear decisive Oaths by the Crucifix (which exceeds not a Foot in Length ; the Body is completely done,

done, distended, and having a Crown on, all in a Crucified Posture) and this puts an End to any Controversy ; for there is not one Instance, or the least Suspicion of Perjury among them. The Crucifix is of Brass, it lies upon the Altar, but they pay no religious Worship to it ; yet they have it in great Reverence, says he. One of the Inhabitants was so sincere, that (rather than forswear himself upon the Crucifix) he confessed a capital Crime before the Minister and myself, says he. They never swear, no, not the common Oaths that prevail in the World ; when they refuse or deny to give what is asked of them, they do it with a strong Affelevation, which they express emphatically enough in their Language, to this Purpose, *You are no more to have it, than if God had forbid it ;* and thus they express the highest Degree of Passion. They do not so much as name the Devil once in their Lifetime.

They have three Chappels in this Isle, each of them with one End towards the *East*, the other towards the *West* ; the *Altar* is always placed at the *East* End : The first of these is called *Christ's Chappel*, the second *St. Columba*, the third *St. Brianan* ; each a Quarter of a Mile distant from another, and built all after one Manner. Thus Mr. *Martin* tells us of their Reformation, and Primitive Christian Temper.

But it is certain, that about the Year 1704, they knew little of Christianity : The General Assembly that Year did refer it to their Commission, to send One thither, privately to instruct the People in the Grounds of the Christian Religion, going from House to House, as appears by the Index of the unprinted Acts of that Assembly. And in *July* that Year, *Alexander Buchan* came to the Commission, and offered to go to that Place ; and having produced ample Testimonials, he was examined by a Committee : And having given them Satisfaction, Application was made by the Commission to the then Laird of *M. Leod*, and his Friends, about Mr. *Buchan's* going to that Place ; and upon the first Day of *August*

gust the foresaid Year, he got his Commission and Instructions to go to *Hirta* as a Catechist, with 200 Merks to carry his Charges. And thereupon, he went to that Place the following Year: And when he came there, found the People much addicted to Idolatry and Superstition; but, according to his Duty and Instructions he had, dealt with them to lay these Courtes aside, and by the Blessing of God on his Endeavours, prevailed very far therein, which cost him no small Pains, as might be particularly instanced; but that would swell this Book to a greater Length than is designed.

Mr. *Buchan* continued in that Island, till the Year 1709, and was maintained upon the Church's publick Fund: But many Years thereof being resting to the Church, that Fund did not answer; whereupon Collections were made by Ministers and Others, for his Subsistence: And this failing also, he returned to *Edinburgh*, bringing along with him, two native Boys, whom he had taught Reading and the Principles of Religion; And they having learned to speak *English*, it gave such Satisfaction to Ministers, and People, at *Edinburgh*, that they were much encouraged.

About this Time, the Society in *Scotland* for Propagating Christian Knowledge, was erected; and when this begun Work was like to stop for want of a Maintenance; they, upon Application to them, agreed to encourage the same; and Mr. *Buchan's* Success was such, and the Need of the People so great, not having seen a Minister among them for many Years, and having none to preach, baptize, censure scandalous Persons, and perform the Pastoral Duties to them, that the Commission of the General Assembly referred it to the Presbytery of *Edinburgh*, to enter him on Trials; and the Right Honourable Sir *Hew Dalrymple*, Lord President of the Session, as Preses of the foresaid Society, in Name, and at the Appointment of the General-Meeting thereof, wrote a Letter to the Tutor and Friends of the new Laird of *M^rLeod*, he being Minor,

in Favours of Mr. *Buchan*; and they agreeing to give Encouragement to his continuing in *Hirta*, he was, upon the 15th Day of *March* 1710 Years, ordained in *St. Giles's Church* in *Edinburgh*, to serve in the said Island. And, that worthy and pious Gentleman, Mr. *Alexander Mack-Leod* Advocate, who has been still friendly to Mr. *Buchan*, was pleased to countenance the Ordination with his personal Presence; and he, as concerned in the said Family, and the two Natives, *Murdo Campbell* and *Finlay M'Donald*, did, in Name of the Laird of *M'Leod*, and the Inhabitants of *Hirta*, take the said *Alexander Buchan* by the Hand, in token of their Reception of him as evangelical Pastor of that Island: And he got an Extract of his Ordination along with him.

Upon his Ordination, Major *Ja. LeBlanc*, and Mr. *George Buchan* Clerk to the Commission of Tiends, were pleased to give Money, each of them, to build a Manse for the Minister in *Hirta*: Many other charitable Christians, did give Books, and some both Money and Books; particularly, diverse Members of the Society did contribute out of their own Pockets, there being no Annualrents of the Funds come in, which was collected by *William Brown* of *Dalgourie*. And upon the 30 Day of *March* the same Year, the General-Meeting of the foresaid Society gives the said *Alexander Buchan* a Commission, to be one of their School-masters, and Instructions how to carry.

July 7th 1711, When the Society's Funds began to produce Annualrent, they settled 300 Merks yearly of Sallary upon Mr. *Buchan*. And thereafter, upon the Report of his diligence and good success, and that his Family was encreasing, the Society granted an Addition to his Sallary, First, of another 100 Merks, and thereafter 60 *L*. Upon which one of his Daughters and one of his Sons were maintained at *Edinburgh*, and other two of his Daughters at *Glasgow*; And now, he has sent another Son to *Edinburgh* to be bred.

But I return to view the present State of *Hirta*. Mr. *Buchan*, upon the Report he had of *Hirta*, before the Commission of the General Assembly sent him first there, found himself under more than an ordinary Call to go thither; yea, the need of that People was so impressed upon him, that he came from *Thurso in Caithness* to *Edinburgh*, to offer his Service to that Place, which, as to the worldly Part, was not, nor is to this Day, very tempting; But God in his holy Providence, it seems, had a good Work to carry on there: For, notwithstanding of what is before represented of the bad State of that Island, they are now (Praise to God) in a better Case: For, whereas none of them could either read or write, now many of them can do both; and as to the Principles of Religion, they are generally well seen and grounded therein; and, which is most to be regarded and prized, their Esteem of, and Love to Religion, does appear from their Desire of Knowledge; And that they will by no Means allow their Pastor to leave them, so much as to pay a Visit to his Friends, and enquire anent his Children at *Edinburgh* and *Glasgow*, lest he should not come back to them; So that he was necessitate to send his Wife, *Katharine Campbell*, to look after his Children, and Affairs in the Continent.

Mr. *Buchan*, several Years ago, got a Kirk-session constitute at *Hirta*, which exercises Discipline; And he has ministred the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper amongst them oftner than once, and had the Elements furnished by Members of the foresaid Society. Care is taken to suppress Immorality in the Place.

The Inhabitants are in great Fear lest that, upon their present Minister's Decease, they will not soon be provided of another; and to prevent this, he, at their Desire is breeding his two Sons at Schools in *Edinburgh*, that if they ever be in a Capacity, and do incline to the Ministry, one of them may be employed there;

there ; which is his sincere Wish. And Mr. *Buchan* has been very much obliged to that religiously inclin'd, and publick-spirited Gentleman, Dr. *Alexander Dundas*, Preses to the Committee of the Society, who has not only been a Physician to those poor Children, but in Place of a Father. And Mr. *Buchan* does thankfully acknowledge the many Favours he and his Family have received from charitable Persons, Ministers and Others, in *Edinburgh* and *Glasgow*. And he must own, that the great Kindness of Christian Friends, and the Fruits that his Labours have had, has been very encouraging unto him, when solitary in that remote Island. He desires to bless the Lord, that raised up that noble Society, and inclined them to bestow so much of their Funds, and even Members to give of their private Money, to subsist him at his Work in that Place. But if he were gone, 'tis to be feared few will go, upon so small an Allowance, to reside in that Island. He is now come to a good Age, and cannot live long, considering his Toil and Food ; so that he needs not be anxious about himself. But, O that the Lord would put it in the Heart of some piously, and charitably inclined Persons, to mortify a Fund, for a fixed yearly Stipend to a Minister in that Place, to continue the Gospel there ! This would be truly a charitable Deed, and would not fail of a Reward. And that being done, the Society might be prevailed with to continue a Sallary for a School-master ; for it is to be feared, that another Minister will not undergo the Fatigue to teach Reading and Writing, for the Work of the Ministry is a sufficient Task of itself. This Island is Part of another Parish, and the Heritor has no Profit by it ; and it pays no Tiend ; and tho' it did, it would be of little Avail, the Product being mostly Fowls, Eggs, Oil, &c. And tho' the Tiend were paid to the Minister, he has no Way to vend the same : And there will be a Necessity for Mr. *Buchan*, or any Minister that shall be settled

settled there, to fix a Correspondence at *Glasgow*, and another in the Isle of *Sky* and *Long Island*, to have Malt, Meal, and other Necessaries, safely conveyed to them yearly with the Steward, when he comes to the Island; And if this were done, it would be a singular Mercy to him, and the Place.

None can subsist in this Island, without the Favour and Countenance of the Laird of *McLeod*, and the Steward; and Mr. *Buchan* gives Thanks for the Kindness he has had from the Managers of that Estate, during the Minority: And now, that the Representative of that ancient Family is near the Years of Majority, it is not to be doubted, but he will go on to encourage the Promoting the Knowledge of Religion among that People, as his Predecessor did. Not only the Head of that Family, but almost the whole Name of *McLeod* have been Asserters of the Protestant Religion, and against Popery; and will give Orders that Mr. *Buchan* meet with all Encouragement in *Hirta*.

One of the Inhabitants called *Roderick*, a Fellow that could not read, obtruded a false Religion upon the credulous People, which he pretended to have received from *John the Baptist*. It is remarkable, that in his Rhapsodies, which he called Prayers, he had the Word *Eli*, and to this Purpose, *Eli* is our Preserver. There is a little Hill, upon which he says *John the Baptist* delivered Sermons and Prayers to him; this he called *John's Bush*, and made the People believe it was so sacred, that if either Cow or Sheep did taste of its Grass, they were to be killed immediately after, and the Owners were to eat them, but never without the Company of the Impostor; to whose Wife and Family also a good Share was sent. He made them likewise believe, that each of them had a tutelar Saint in Heaven to interceed for them, and that the

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Anniversary of every One of those was to be necessarily observed, by having a splendid Treat, at which the Impostor was always the principal Person. He taught the Women a devout Hymn, which he said he had from the *Virgin Mary*; he made them believe that it secured Women from Miscarriage that could repeat it by Heart, and each of them paid the Impostor a Sheep for it. He imposed upon them first, the *Friday's Fast*, in the which no Meat must be tasted, no not so much as a Snuff of Tobacco, which they love dearly, till Night; this bare Fast, without any religious Exercise attending it, was the Badge of his Followers. He also imposed several Pennances upon them, which they were obliged to observe; such as, standing in cold Water (without Regard to the Season, whether Frost or otherwise) during his tyrannical Pleasure. This diabolical Severity was Evidence enough, that he was sent by him who is the *Father of Lies, and was a Murderer from the Beginning*. He commanded every Family to slay a Sheep upon the Threshold of their Doors at Night, but not touch it with a Knife, but to cut off its Neck with the crooked Spade, with which they delve their Corn-Land, whose Edge is almost half an Inch thick; and if either Young or Old tasted a Bit of it that Night, the equivalent Number of Sheep were to be slain thus the following Day. He forbid the Use of the Lord's Prayer, Creed, and Ten Commandments. He would have them lay the Faces of the Dead to the *South*, and not to the *East*, as is usual; but they would not obey this his Command. He persuaded the Women, that if they, in all Things complied with his new Revelation, they should undoubtedly be carried to Heaven, and that in their Journey thither, they were to pass through the Firmament riding upon white Horses. He taught them many other ridiculous Things.

Mr. *Martin* says, That upon Examination, some of the Women confessed to Mr. *Campbel*, the Minister, and him, that the Place and Manner of Teaching the Women the Hymn abovementioned afforded to him a fair

A Description of
 fair Opportunity for Debauching of the simple Women.

This Impostor continued for the Space of several Years, without Controul, to delude these poor innocent Well-meaning People, until at last his villanous Design upon the Women was found out, I mean, says he, That he intended to accomplish under the Mask of the devout Hymn that he taught them; and was first discovered by the Officer's Wife, who by the Impostor was first proselyted to his false Doctrines, and after that he would have debauched her from her conjugal Fidelity. This Woman was so heroically virtuous, as to communicate his lewd Design to her Husband, who ordered the Matter so, as to be in another Room hard by at the same Time he supposed *Roderick* would be coming; there he stays until the Leacher began to carress his Wife, and then he thought himself obliged seasonably to appear for her Rescue, and boldly reproved the Impostor for his wicked Practices, which were so widely contrary to his Profession, and that upon the whole it appeared he had no true Mission.

The Impostor was very much surprized at this unexpected and fatal Disappointment, which put him into an extreme Disorder; insomuch that he asked the Officer's Pardon, acknowledging his Crime, and promising never to attempt the like again. The Officer continued to upbraid him, telling him to his Face, That he was set on by the Devil; that Innocence and Chastity were always the Effects of true Religion, and that the contrary Practices were countenanced by false Prophets; and that now they needed no other Proof of his being a notorious Deceiver.

One of the Inhabitants called *Muldonick* alias *Lewis*, Cousin-german to the Impostor, had a Ewe, which brought forth three Lambs at once, they were seen to feed upon the Bush pretended to be sacred; but *Lewis* would not comply with the Order for killing the Sheep, and had the Boldness to aver, That it was an unreasonable Piece of Worship, to destroy so many Cattle, and deprive the Owners of their Use; adding withal
 That

That he never heard any such thing practised in any of the Western Isles upon a religious Account. The Impostor insisted upon the heavenly Command, which was to be observed by all his Followers, adding the dreadful Threatning against such as proved disobedient thereto; but *Lewis* would by no means be prevailed upon, chusing rather to be excluded from the pretended Worship, than to kill his Sheep.

The simple People looked for no less than a speedy Judgment to befall this Recusant; but when nothing ensued upon his Disobedience, all of them began to have a less Veneration for the Impostor than before; nay, some ~~and~~ privately, that they might as well have ventured to run the same Risque with *Lewis*, for the preservation of their Cattle.

Upon Masters *Campbel* and *Martin*, their Arrival at *St. Kilda*, *Roderick* made a publick Recantation of his Imposture; and being then by them brought to the Isle of *Harries*, and afterwards to the Isle of *Skye*, he has made publick Confession in several Churches, of his Converse with the *Devil*, and not *John the Baptist*, as he pretended, and seems to be very penitent. He is now (saith Mr. *Martin*) in *Skye* Isle, from whence he is never to return to his native Country. His Neighbours are heartily glad to be rid of such a Villain, and are now happily delivered from the Errors he imposed upon them.

The following Paragraphs being omitted at their proper Places, are here insert to fill up a Blank.

About 32 or 33 Years since, there was a Cock-boat came from a Ship to *St. Kilda* for Water, being favoured by a perfect Calm: The Men discerned an infinite Number of Eggs upon the Rocks, which charmed them to venture near the Place, and at last purchased a competent Number of them; One of the Seamen was so careful, as to put them into his wide Canvass Breeches, which he put off him for this Purpose. Some of the Inhabitants of *St. Kilda* happened to be in the Isle that Day; A Parcel of them were Spectators of

of this Diversion, and were offended at it, being done without their Consent; therefore they devised an Expedient, which at once robb'd the Seamen of their Breeches and Eggs, and it was thus: They found a few loose Stones in the Superficies of the Rock, some of which they let fall perpendicularly above the Seamen, the Terror of which oblig'd them quickly to remove, abandoning both Breeches and Eggs for their safety: and those Tarpawlin Breeches were no small Ornament there, where all wore girded Plaids at that Time.

In the Month of *July* a considerable Quantity of Mackrel run themselves ashore, but always with a Spring-tide. The *Amphibia* seen here, are the Otters and Seals; this latter the Inhabitants reckon very good Meat. There is never a Bee more than a Tree or Shrub seen here at any Time. The Inhabitants of *St. Kilda* are reputed very Cunning, and there is scarce any circumventing them in Traffick and Bartering; the Voice of One is the Voice of all the Rest, their common Interest uniting them firmly together.

They marry very young, the Women at about 13 or 14 Years of Age; and are nice in examining the Degrees of Consanguinity, e're they marry. They give Suck to their Children 2 Years. They live but about 60 Years. They are not infested with the several Diseases, which are so predominant in other Parts of the World; as they are not Practitioners of their Vices. The Distemper that most prevails here, is a spotted Fever, and that too confined to one Tribe, to whom this Disease is, as it were, become hereditary: Others are liable to Fluxes, Fevers, Stiches, the Spleen; for all which they have but very few Remedies: To get away their Stiches they commonly ly upon a warm Hearth, with the Side affected downwards; this they look upon to be almost infallible for dispelling the Humour, or Wind, that torments them.

In the Face of the Rock, *South* from the Town, is the famous Stone known by the Name of the *Mistress's Stone*;

Stone; it resembles a Door exactly, and is in the very Front of this Rock, which is 20 or 30 Fathom perpendicular in Height, the Figure of it being discernable about the Distance of a Mile: Upon the Lintel of this Door, every Batchelor-Wooer is by an ancient Custom obliged, in Honour, to give a Specimen of his Affection for the Love of his Mistress, and it is thus: He is to stand on his Left-foot, having the one half of it over the Rock, and then he brings his Right-foot forward, putting its Heel to the utmost Point of the Toe of his Left foot, which is half over the Rock already, and then in this Posture bowing himself, he puts both his Fists further out to the Toe of the Right Foot: Then, after he has performed this, he has acquired no small Reputation, being always after it accounted worthy of the finest Mistress in the World: They firmly believe that this Achievement is always attended with the desired Success; Tho' none other, except themselves, possibly, would look on or believe such a Project fit for any other Purpose than to rob them both of their Mistress and Life at once.

There are round St. *Kilda* Isle 4 Arches or Vaults, through which the Sea passes, as doth the Day-light from either Side, which is visible to any, tho' at a good Distance; some of them representing a large Gate: Two of these look to the South, and two North-west; That on the Point of the West Bay is 6 Fathom high above Water, 4 in Breadth, 50 Paces in Length, the Top two Fathom thick, and very strong, the Cattle feeding upon it.

There are several Veins of different Stone to be seen in the Rocks of the South-east Bay: Upon the North-side of this Rock is One as it were cut out by Nature, resembling a Terras-Walk. The Crystal grows under the Rock, at the Landing-place; this Rock must be pierced a Foot or two deep, before the Crystal can be had from the Bed of Sand where it lies; the Water at the Bottom is of a black Colour; the largest Piece is not above four Inches long, and about two in Diameter, each Piece Sexangular.

25 A Description of *St. KILDA*.

Upon the West side of this Isle there is a Valley, with a Declension towards the Sea, having a Ravulet running through the Middle of it, on each Side of which is an Ascent of Half a Mile; all which Piece of Ground is called by the Inhabitants, *The Female Warrior's Glen*. This *Amazon*, or Warlike Woman, is famous in their Traditions: Her House or Dairy of Stone is yet extant; some of the Inhabitants dwell in it in Summer, tho' it be some hundred Years old; the whole built of Stone, without any Wood, Lime, Earth, or Mortar to cement it, and is built in Form of a Circle, Pyramid-wise towards the Top, having a Vent in it, the Fire being always in the Centre of the Floor; the Stones are long and thin, which supplies the Defect of Wood. The Body of this House contains not above Nine Persons sitting: There are three Beds or low Vaults that go off the side of the Wall, a Pillar betwixt each Bed, which contains five Men a-piece: Another Entry to one of these low Vaults is a Stone standing upon one End fixed upon this, they lay the ordinary laid horn Helmet. There are two Stones upon the other Side, upon which it is said she laid her Sword. She is said to have been much addicted to Hunting, and that in her Time all the void Space betwixt this Isle and that of *Harries*, was one continued Tract of Dry land; but sunk by, or washed away by the Sea since. There were some Years ago a Pair of large Deer's horns found in the Top of *Oterveaul Hill*, almost a Foot under Ground; and there was also a wooden Dish full of Deer's Grease found in the same Hill under Ground. It is also said of this Warrior, that she let loose her Grey-bounds after the Deer in *St. Kilda*, making short Course towards the opposite Isles.

If the Reader be curious, to hear more of this remote Isle, its Inhabitants and Commodities, he may consult the above cited *Mr. Martin's* two Books there, and be content.

FINIS